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5 February 1959

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN



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DAILY BRIEF

II. ASIA-AFRICA

NO *Iran-USSR: It is now evident that Iranian-Soviet negotiations in Tehran are continuing amid indications that Foreign Minister Hekmat would still like to conclude the proposed non-aggression pact. While Hekmat professes to the American ambassador that he is trying to get the Soviet officials to "take the initiative and go home," he still appears to be in a bargaining mood. According to Hekmat, Khrushchev has authorized nullification of articles of the 1921 treaty that are offensive to Iran if Tehran will break with the Baghdad Pact. Hekmat has told the Iranian Senate, however, that Iran intends to maintain its Baghdad Pact ties and commitments.

Ankara, Karachi, and Tehran continue to press for stronger assurances from the US in the proposed bilateral agreements.

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Meanwhile, both the Shah and the prime minister are reported ill. [redacted]

Watch Committee conclusions--Asia-Africa: Situations susceptible of direct exploitation by Sino-Soviet hostile action which would jeopardize US interests exist in the Middle East and Southeast Asia, particularly in Iraq, Iran, and Cambodia.

Middle East: Although the situation in the Middle East remains precarious, a deliberate initiation of large-scale hostilities is unlikely in the immediate future.

Iran: Should present Iranian-Soviet negotiations break down and an Iranian-US bilateral agreement be signed, the USSR will retaliate with stepped-up propaganda, economic and diplomatic pressure, and possibly with other measures short of direct military action. [redacted]

III. THE WEST

Honduras: President Villeda, apparently now fully aware of the dangerously weakened position of his regime, is attempting to avert a new flare-up in the countryside between his supporters and the military. He has publicly charged both the civilians and the military with equal responsibility for past incidents, and is believed making every effort privately to mollify the long-provoked military leaders. The army would almost certainly resist any invasion of Honduras by Honduran emigrés now in Nicaragua. [redacted]
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DAILY BRIEF

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

No Back-up Material

III. THE WEST

Political-Military Crisis Continuing in Honduras

The weak and indecisive administration of Honduran President Ramon Villeda Morales continues under strong conflicting pressures from the military, from his own increasingly disillusioned Liberal party, from the basically hostile Somoza regime in neighboring Nicaragua, and from a war of nerves being conducted by a clandestine "liberation movement" composed of emigrés based in Nicaragua. The President, now apparently fully aware of the dangerously weakened position of his regime, is attempting to avert a new flare-up between his supporters and the military.

The hostility between the Liberal majority and military leaders identified in the public mind with the long dictatorial rule of Villeda's predecessors reached such a peak in December that in some outlying areas law and order apparently broke down completely. While making every effort in private to mollify the military leaders, Villeda has publicly attributed blame for the feuding equally to the Liberals and the military, and indirectly warned the army leaders this week that if they should attempt to oust him, they would face bitter civil resistance. Villeda still retains wide, though eroding, popular backing, and this is a major deterrent to a military seizure of power.

The unrest and tension throughout the country has been effectively exploited and aggravated by a group of emigrés based in Nicaragua who, regularly since mid-December, have been announcing an imminent "liberation movement" to unseat Villeda. The emigrés are being used by the Somoza government in Nicaragua to further the war of nerves against Villeda, whom Somoza thoroughly distrusts. Any invasion of Honduras by this small group would probably be resisted by the Honduran Army, since present army leaders are just as much the target of the "liberation movement" as is Villeda.

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